

BENIN PROVINCE.

UDO & SILUKO

WP. 17098.

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KADUNA JUNCTION  
R. 970

1894



INTELLIGENCE REPORT ON THE UDO AND SILUKO  
DISTRICTS, BENIN DIVISION, BENIN PROVINCE.

by H. F. Marshall, District Officer

I. INTRODUCTORY.

March, 1939.

Scope.

The area covered by this report comprises most of the Udo and Siluko Court areas. Certain villages at present attending Udo Court have been excluded as they have closer affinities to Usehin, while one village, Ugbogui, which is at present in the Usehin Court area, is dealt with in this report as it has historical ties with Udo. I have joined the Udo and Siluko areas together in this report as the Siluko area is a purely artificial area created since the advent of Government, most of the villages serving the same land ju-ju as Udo.

The People.

2. The people are of mixed origins. The majority of the villages are Bin<sup>1</sup>, but to the west of the area there has probably long been a strong admixture of Ikale blood from the Okitipupa Division. Since the advent of Government there has been a large influx of Ikales into this area. Down the rivers there are many Ijoh settlements, some of considerable antiquity, while Siluko itself, which started as an Itsekeri settlement, is now comprised almost equally of Itsekeris and Yorubas, the Yorubas coming from as far afield as Lagos, Akure and Ibadan.

3. In so mixed a population it is difficult to generalise but it may be said that the Binis and Ikales are mainly farmers, the Itsekeris and Yorubas are traders and the Ijohs are canoe makers and fishermen.

4. Siluko which was once an important trading centre has now lost much of its trade and its population is probably shrinking. Though there are still some important and intelligent traders there, there is now no element which might be described as an educated class.

Glossary.

5. The following local terms will be used in this report:-

/Onogie ...







Onogie (pl.Enogie)	-	Hereditary Village Head.
Ohen	-	Hereditary ju-ju priest
Odionwele. (pl.Edionwele)	-	Senior member of Edion age-grade.
Ekhaime	-	Title-holders.
Edion	-	Senior age-grade.
Ighele	-	Second age-grade.
Iroghae	-	Junior age-grade.
Okosuwe	-	Oldest man of a village (Ijoh)
Dedemowe	-	Second man in village (Ijoh).
Bale	-	Headman of village (Ikale).
Oga	-	Headman of Camp.
Onotuyevbo	-	Sponsor in Benin.

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Strangers.

7. It has already been said that a number of the villages are of "stranger" origin, but in most cases these villages have acquired the status of Bini villages. There are, however, a large number of Sobos in the area who have not been absorbed and who may be said to form a stranger minority. The large village of Siluko is almost entirely a stranger settlement.

Consultation with the people.

8. It was not possible to visit each village individually, but representatives of the villages were met at a number of meetings held throughout the area. A list of these meetings is given in Appendix "B". Finally, general meetings were held at which the proposals for the future were fully discussed and agreed upon.

## II. GEOGRAPHICAL.

### Area and Population.

9. The area of the district covered by this report is estimated at 600 square miles and its population at 11,459, giving a density of 19 to the square mile.

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Boundaries.

10. The area is bounded on the west by the Siluko







River which forms the Provincial Boundary between the Ondo and Benin Provinces. On the North it has a boundary with the Usehin District of the Benin Division; on the east the Oase River forms the boundary between it and the Benin District and to the south lies the Ekanwan District of the Benin Division and, further west, the mail-launch route which forms the boundary between the Benin Province and the Warri and Ondo Provinces.

#### Physical Features.

11. With two large rivers, the one forming the western, the other the eastern boundary, the area is well watered.

For the most part it is covered by high forest of great economic value. This forest is being exploited by various European firms.

12. There is a Native Administration road, which, crossing the Oase by ferry at Iguoriake, links up Siluko with Benin. From this road branch roads lead to Udo and northward to Usehin and Ugbesse. The country to the north is suitable for cocoa but this and most other produce is evacuated by water from Siluko.

### III. Historical.

#### Ancient History.

13. The history of the villages is, for the most part, the history of a series of scattered migrations from Benin. It will be easiest to deal with it by groups of villages.

#### Udo Villages.

14. Udo claims to be an aboriginal village, the traditional founders being Ukpe and Oye who came from the land of spirits. It is said that Oramiyan who came from Ife to form the second Yoruba dynasty stayed at Udo on his way to Benin. Udo appears to have been a village of great importance and claims precedence next after Benin. Oba Ewuare is said to have made his son Onogie of Udo, but this line of Onogie died out and Oba Ozolua, made his son Aruwana Onogie. On the death of Ozolua, Aruwana rebelled against his elder

/brother..







brother who had become Oba Isigie. The war lasted for many years but finally, Aruwana committed suicide by drowning himself in a small lake near Udo. This lake which is known as Odighiri is still regarded as a very strong ju-ju. It is close to the main path from Udo to the Siluko river and the west, but all passers-by lower their voices as they pass it for fear of disturbing the spirits.

15. It seems probable that Aruwana's rebellion was the last of a series of revolts by Udo. In any case the wise men of Benin, the Ogbelaka, decided that there would never be peace in Benin so long as an Oba's brother was Onogie of Udo and they suggested that a commoner should be appointed Iyashere of Udo, the appointment to be for life only. Ezegin of Uselu was appointed as the first Iyashere, and he was followed by a series of appointments from Benin until, in the time of Oba Ovonramwe (1888-1897), the title was made hereditary.

16. Udo claim to have owned all the land between the Osse and the Siluko rivers and to have had a boundary with Usehin near the Oha river. Most of the older villages in this area admit that they were given land by Udo and that they served the Udo land ju-ju. Part of any leopard killed in this bush was taken to the Iyashere of Udo.

17. In addition to Udo itself, the Udo clan consists of the villages of Ugbelegan, Iguafole, Utesi and Iguowan. Each of these villages was founded by migrants from Udo. The small village of Udo-Aken, though of different origin, appears to have joined with them for many purposes. The founder of this village was an emancipated slave who had been captured by the Binis from Ugo. He was sent to make a farm near Udo in the time of Oba Akengbuda.

#### Orah Group.

18. Orah is said to have been founded by warriors from Benin in the time of Oba Ozolua. They deny that they served the land ju-ju of Udo or that they had anything to do with the Iyashere of Udo. If this is true the reason probably is that

/Orah ...







Orah was founded as an out-post against the rebellious Udos.

19. Ikpoba and its sub-villages Iguokolor and Evbogun are all said to have been founded by migrants from Benin in the time of Oba Adolor (1848-1888). These villages were granted land by Udo.

20. Iguoriake was founded by a man from Iyera who was sent by the mother of Oba Adolor to form a camp. Until recently it was a place of insignificant size, but situated at the point where the Benin-Siluko road crosses the Osse river, it has of recent years become an important timber base and a small centre of local trade.

#### Urezen Group.

21. Most of the villages of the Urezen Group appear to have been founded in the 15th century and to have been granted land by Udo. Ugbokwa, Izide and Iguokakhin were founded in the time of Ewuare, Ugbokwa by a man from Benin who became the priest of the ju-ju of the Okwa stream, Izide by Ijoh emigrants and Iguokakhin by a man from Alure. Urezen itself was founded in the time of Oba Ozolua by a man from Benin. Later an emigrant from Urezen founded the village of Iguelaiho. The other villages of this group, that is Igueladudu, Odio-baho, Iguerahon, Igueze, Olibokun and Jiyoba, have been founded by immigrants to the area during the past hundred years who have been granted land by one or other of the original villages.

#### Iguobazuwa Group.

22. In the Iguobazuwa Group, the village of Iguobazuwa was founded by a man from Benin in the time of Oba Adolor. Iguogun and Iguetakpa are off-shoots from that village. Afo-Okoro and Sakpoba are modern camps formed since the advent of government as is Oke-Okpon II. Okep-Okpon is said to have been founded in the time of Oba Esigie (circa 1504-1550) by a man from Oza near Oghada.

#### Etete Group

23. The Village of Etete claims to have been founded during the time of Ogiso, the first Yoruba dynasty in Benin.

/Its ...







Its sub-village which is usually known as Etete Waterside was founded by an Itsekeri man called Iyuyu after the Benin expedition. Iyuyu is said at one time to have been a Government interpreter. Ugolo was founded by a man from Benin in the time of Oba Ewuare and Ikoka was founded at the same time.

Ikoha Group.

24. In the Ikoha Group the village of Ugbogui migrated from Udo in the time of Oba Ozolua. Ikoha itself is said to have been founded by Oba Akenzua (circa 1710-1733) by people from Ilaje in Okitipupa Division. This was before he became Oba. When he became Oba he sent warnings out from Benin to fortify Ikoha as a camp against the Ondos. The village of Igue-Obanor is an off-shoot from Ikoha. Sokoro is said to have been founded by an Ijoh man from Izide in the time of Oba Ozolua on land given by Ikoha.

Essi Group. M

25. Umaza and Essi are both ancient villages of Bini origin. The other villages are Siluko which was founded by an Itsekeri man in the time of Oba Ovonramwe, Lakoloko, an old Ijoh settlement which was deserted after the expedition and was later occupied by an Itsekeri man, and the three Okua villages which consist of Ikale settlers who have come since the advent of Government.

Gbelebu Group.

26. The villages of the Gbelebu group are all comparatively modern villages. Oke-Madagbayo and Uba-Balogun came from Benin during the last century. Gbelebu and Safarogbo were founded about the same time by men from Arogbo in the Okitipupa Division, while Oferenge and Gbelemotin were founded by Ikare settlers, the one just before the other just after the advent of Government.

Okumu.

27. Like the Ijoh villages of the Ekenwan District, Okumu claims to have been founded by Oba Orhogbua (circa 1550-1578) by a captive from the Benin River area. They deny, however, that they had any connection with these villages. They were







### Subsequent History.

28. After the death of Aruwana of Udo the history of this area appears to have been uneventful. There were, no doubt, minor rebellions and punitive expeditions but no events which are worthy of particular mention.

### History under Government.

29. This area was brought under control immediately after the Benin Expedition and in that year, 1897, Messrs Alex Miller Brothers established a factory at Siluko, the first Agent being Mr. John MacNeil. During 1898 the area was little visited by the administrative staff from Benin and there was serious encroachment on the area by the agents of the Travelling Commissioner, Ibo-bini who was, of course, an officer, not of the Niger Coast Protectorate, but of the Lagos Colony administration. This encroachment was principally concerned with the villages in the neighbourhood of Ikoha. These villages had been visited by the Travelling Commissioner from Igbo-bini and were informed that they were under the Lagos Government and that they must trade with Lagos and not with Benin. The boundary between the two territories had been fixed in 1897, and was the Siluko River to Ikoha and thence a line to Akure, in such manner as to leave the Idanre territories and farms under the administration of Lagos Colony and the Ado or Benin territories and farms under the administration of the Niger Coast Protectorate.

30. This encroachment did not only damage the trade of Benin but it tended to wean the villages from their allegiance to Benin. Moreover it resulted in an enormous influx of Yoruba traders, mostly attracted by the rich rubber forests, rubber at that time being the principal export crop. The matter was, however, adjusted in 1899, and since then the whole area has been administered from Benin without incident of note.

31. Siluko developed into a fairly important trading station and for long was regarded as the administrative and judicial centre of the district, and the only place where the British Government had a permanent establishment.







### Ancient System.

32. Except in the case of Udo the ancient administrative organisation was the same as that found elsewhere in the Division and was based on an age-grade system. The organisation of Udo was different and will require special mention.

### Udo.

33. At the present time Udo consists of five Idumns or extended families each of which is affiliated to one of the "otus" or family guilds in Benin. These five Idumns with the "otu" to which they are affiliated are as follows:-

<u>Idumu.</u>	<u>Otu</u>
Ogbe	Iwebo
Ihogbe	Aragwa and Iho be
Ogiefa	Idumu Ujefa
Igbesama	Igbesama
Ido	Idumnoisa Ido

34. In each of these Idumns there were a number of title-holders. Some of these titles were hereditary, others went to the senior member of the Edion grade and some were held for life only. They were as follows:-

<u>Idumu</u>	<u>Title.</u>	<u>Nature of Title.</u>
Ogbe	Iyashere	Hereditary
	Eriyo	Held by Odionwele
	Ukor n'Iwebo	Not hereditary
	Omokpan	Not hereditary
Ihogbe	Ihama	Not hereditary
	Isikhure	Not hereditary
	Obazonosoma	Not hereditary
	Aragwa	Not hereditary
Ogiefa	Egobamiye	Not hereditary
	Ohen n'Ozeben	Hereditary
Igbesama	Okao Igbesama	Held by Odionwele
	Ohondighi	Hereditary
		Held by Odionwele Hereditary







35. The title of Iyashere which is the title of the village head is not hereditary until the time of Oba Ovonranwe. Prior to that the Iyashere was appointed by the Oba and came from Benin, the title being held for life only. The other title-holders are appointed by the Iyashere.

36. Idumu Ihogbe appears to be properly two Idumus, Ihogbo and Aragwa, Ihama being the senior title in Ihogbo proper and Aragwa in Aragwa.

37. In addition to this title system there was an age-grade system but, as in Benin, the age-grades were restricted to the two senior grades, Edion and Ighele, the junior grade, Iroghae, being absent.

38. Meetings of the Idumu were held in the house of the senior title-holder of the idumu and were attended by the title-holders, or Ekhaime as they were called, and the Edion.

39. The village meetings were held in the house of the Iyashere and were attended by the Ekhaime and Edion of the whole village.

#### Other Bini Villages.

40. In the Bini villages other than Udo, the system followed the usual lines. The three age-grades, Iroghae, Ighele and Edion, were found and the village council consisted of the Edion age-grade. This was presided over by the Odionwele unless there was an Onogie, an hereditary village head whose forefathers had been given the position by the Oba. A list of the villages and the title of the village head is given in Appendix "A". Some villages have peculiarities which are worthy of special mention.

#### Ugbohwa.

41. Ugbohwa is a village which is primarily devoted to the worship of the Okwa ju-ju and was established for this purpose. The usual custom in such villages is that the Oken, the hereditary priest of the ju-ju, is the village head but in Okwa this is not so, the Odionwele is regarded as the village head.







proper and Etete Waterside. Etete proper is a Bini village with an Enogie, Etete Waterside is of Itsekeri origin. The Itsekeris now appear to follow Bini custom and to become Edion performing the necessary ceremonies in their own village, but the two parts join together for common meetings in the house of the Enogie.

#### Iguoriake.

43. Iguoriake consists of a large number of "idumns" and camps of different origin, some from Benin, some from neighbouring villages, and some from other Divisions. In addition there are a number of Ijoh camps which have been established as long as Iguoriake itself. In such a community there is little real organisation, though the edionwele of Unumoke, the original Bini settlement, is regarded as the village head, while Edomi who was the original Ijoh settler is regarded as the head of the Ijohs.

#### Ikoha.

44. Ikoha consisted of four Idumus but their inhabitants were of mixed origin, some tracing their descent from the original Ilaje settlers and others from the warriors sent out from Benin. Each of these sections had its own Ediongrade and its own Odionwele, the Odionwele of the warriors, the Iyokwo, being known as the Okakwo. For internal affairs the Odionwele of the original settlers was regarded as the village head, but messages from the Ooa came to the Okakwo and meetings arising there-from were held in his house.

#### Camps.

45. Some of the Bini villages dealt with in this report are of very recent origin and are really nothing more than camps, though they will in time develop into villages. In these villages the founder is regarded as the village head

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### Ijoh Villages.

47. Among the Ijoh villages, that is Okumu, Obelebu and Saforogbo, the age-grades are not so clearly defined as among the Binis. The oldest man in the village is known as the Okosuwe and is the village head. Next to him comes the Dedemowe, the second oldest man in the village. The male population is organised into three grades known as Oshigyi, Kalakoshue and Kalakposi. These are not strictly age-grades, as merit is taken into account in promoting from one grade to another. Village meetings are summoned by the Okosuwe and may be attended by all adults.

48. The village of Okumu consists of two parts, Okumu proper and Sikoloba. At the present time these two units are in different Court areas, Okumu attending Udo Native Court, while Sikoloba goes to Siluko. This artificial division has resulted in the creation of two villages, where there was only one, Sikoloba having no Okosuwe or Dedemowe of its own.

### Siluko.

49. The large village of Siluko is really nothing but a stranger's settlement, though there are at the present time some Binis living there. It appears that the original settler was an Itsekeri man called Amule, though there is some doubt as to how he came to settle there. The most generally accepted story is that before he became Oba, Oba Ovonramwe stayed with a friend of his at Iguokakhin. While he was there an Itsekeri man named Etchie suggested that a trading place on the Siluko river above Izide would be profitable and offered to send a man there. The people of Essi and Umaza, to whom the land probably belonged, were told to clear a site while Iguokakhin and other villages in that area cleared a road to

Ekhimi tree there, thus giving Amule  
Two of Amule's original followers are





which is called Inyator, and as such the nominal head of the village, but Popo who is a son of Etchie is probably the most influential Itsekeri there, while Amule's own son is accorded some recognition.

50. Immediately after the expedition the area was inundated by Yorubas, a large number settling in Siluko itself. The Yoruba who has been settled there longest is regarded as the Bale of the Yorubas, while the Imam of Mohammedans, who is also a Yoruba, is accorded the second position in the Yoruba community. It is said that the Itsekeris and Yorubas have always held meetings together, which were attended by the "alagba". It seems impossible to say accurately who is and who is not an "alagba" but the term may be taken to include the senior settlers, seniority being reckoned by the length of time one has been settled in Siluko.

51. In addition to the Itsekeris and Yorubas there are now a fairly large Bini population and a number of Ikales, but these latter live for the most part in camps rather than in the village itself. These two sections of the community are also said to join for meetings. The Binis follow Bini custom and become Edion, while the headman of each of the Ikale camps is accorded the Edion status.

52. For the purposes of tax collection Siluko is at present divided into two parts, the one consisting of the Itsekeris alone, the other of the rest of the community.

#### Ikale Village.

53. In addition to a large number of Ikale camps scattered over the area, some of which have practically the status of separate villages, there are the two fairly old established Ikale villages of Oforenge and Gbelemotin. The organisation

villages is very similar to that of a Bini village, they call the grades by different names. The "Otu-Omede" hae, the "Edema" of Ighele and the Gbelemotin the original founder is ed as the Bale or headman of the village.

and another man has been ...





been appointed etc. In that system he was appointed I was unable to discover, he is neither the oldest man, nor the son of the founder, nor the oldest surviving settler, he appears nevertheless to be generally recognised as the village head.

#### Village Groups.

54. It was contrary to the policy of Benin to encourage large federations of villages. Normally each village managed its own internal affairs and had direct contact with Benin. Combinations of villages did, however, exist for certain purposes. The sub-villages of Udo, that is Ugolegan, Iguafole, Utesi and Iglovan joined with Udo for all purposes. The village of Udo-Aken also joined them for some purposes, but did not serve the Oba with them.

55. The villages round Urezen appear to have formed a closely connected group and state that they used to meet at Urezen to discuss matters of common interest. The villages in this group were Urezen, Igueladudu, Iguokakhin, Oliobaho, Iguelaiho, Izide, Iguerahon, Ugbokwa, and Igueze. The two Ikale villages of Olibokun and Uiyoba were put on the land by Iguokakhin and may be regarded as being in this group.

56. It is also said that Ikpoba and its sub-villages Iguokolor and Eybogun met with Orah to discuss matters of common interest. Similarly the villages of Oke-Makabaiyo, Uba-Balogun and Gboclebu are said to have met.

#### Position of Iyashere of Udo.

57. The Iyashere of Udo claims a position of seniority over all the area covered by this report. The majority of villages agree that they were granted land by Udo and that once a year representatives from Udo came to sacrifice to their land juju. They also agree that the Iyashere of Udo had certain privileges as, for example, the right to receive the skin of any leopard killed in that "bush". The only vil-

the villages of the Etete group. While the

a position of seniority, it does not

interfere with matters outside





### Position of Women.

58. There were no women's societies and women took no part in the administration, though they might be consulted on matters which closely concerned them.

### Administration under Government.

59. After the Benin expedition a Native Council was set up in Benin having administrative and judicial functions. This Council was presided over by the Resident and consisted of certain of the Chiefs in Benin. In 1914 Oba Ovonramwe died in exile and his son was appointed Oba as Eweka II. He was made head of the administration and was assisted by a Council of Chiefs. Two years later the Division was divided up into Districts each under the control of a District Head. The District Heads were chosen from the title-holders in Benin. The whole of the area covered by this report was included in the Siluko District, the District Head living at Siluko. The position remained unchanged until 1935 when the District Head system was abolished. Since that time the Oba has dealt direct with the village heads.

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## V. JUDICIAL.

### Ancient System.

65. The judicial system was similar to that found elsewhere in the Division. There was no clear-cut distinction between administrative and judicial functions, the vast majority of cases would originate in the form of a complaint made to any person whose position gave him some influence over the community. This might be the head of the house or, specially connected with the age-grade, to the senior member of the age-grade. For example a complaint that A, a member of the age-grade, had failed to do his share of the work would be made to the Okao-Ighele, the senior member of the age-grade. He would investigate the complaint and could on the other hand a

/complaint ...











Appeal.

69. Appeal from the Village Council lay to the Oba who would be approached through the "Onotuyevbo" or sponsor.

System under Government.

70. After the advent of Government and the formation of a Native Council in Benin, the Council, presided over by the Resident, had jurisdiction throughout the Benin Territories. In 1914 a Native Court was established in Benin and two years later a Native Court was established at Siluko. This Court had jurisdiction over the whole of the Division west of the Osse. The Court members were selected from the larger villages and were intended to represent the various sections of the community, Binis, Itsekris, Ikales, and Ijohs. In 1924 the Siluko Court area was sub-divided, new courts being established at Udo and Usehin.

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List of Villages and Village Heads.











Village	Idumu	Village Head
Lekaloko	-	Oga
Siluko	{ Siluko I { Siluko II	Priest of Inyator Bale
Okua I	-	Oga
Okua II	-	Oga
Okua III	-	Oga
Gbelebu	-	Okosuwe
Oke-Madagbaiyo	{ Idumuba { Idumuedo { Idumukhun { Idumeuzire	Odionwele
Uba-Balogun	-	Odionwele
Oforenge	-	Bale
Gbelemotin	-	Bale
Gbelemotin L'ame	-	Okosuwe
Safarogbo	-	Okosuwe
Okumu	{ Okumu { Sikoloba	Okosuwe.



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